



Virtual Field Trip Guidelines:

Virtual Field Trips (VFTs) are one way the WWW is truly revolutionizing learning in the classroom. As someone who always has strived to provide meaningful experiences for my students, I love the VFT concept! Still, I have learned over time that VFTs require serious planning and consideration in order to make them a success. Keep in mind that they should be nicely couched within your existing curriculum. You have enough material to cover without adding additional lessons simply because they're novel! Also, remember that you are taking your class outside the four walls of your classroom, albeit via cyberspace, and you must provide just as much supervision and structure as you would on a traditional field trip. With these caveats said, here's a set of practical guidelines based on my own experiences for preparing, conducting and evaluating VFTs with your students:

Do

1. Select a trip which has a clear connection to what you are studying in class
2. Collect signed parental permission slips to take your class online (know your school division's AUP!)
3. Be responsible as the chaperone while your class is online
4. Plan ahead for your trip:
 - teach a preparatory lesson before the online trip
 - preview the site and know the content therein
 - check all links up to three clicks away from the tour
 - provide step-by-step tasks to accomplish
 - consider a treasure hunt checklist for students to follow
 - perhaps have students gather text and images to make a scrapbook
 - design a WebQuest which requires students to complete an assignment
 - state a measurable objective for your culminating activity
5. Be sure your VFT is in your lesson plans
6. Place a time limit on the trip
7. Be the tour guide - help students pace themselves
8. Consider using a projector and touring as a class
9. Consider pairs or small groups if students work on their own
10. View all monitor screens in use from one vantage point
11. Use the History folder to see where a browser has been
12. Extend the experience to word processing, desk top publishing, and multimedia presentations
13. Follow through on a plan of assessment for completed student work
14. Have at least one follow-up lesson after the trip

Don't

1. Allow students to wander online on their own
2. Present the site without knowing it in detail
3. Go on a trip without classroom preparation ahead of time
4. Use VFT's as an unstructured use of free time
5. Complete a VFT and have little or no follow-up - help kids make those connections to their learning!

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